

P.S. I sent the draft of this letter to a distinguished 'outside' scientist and he has allowed me to quote part of his reply. He comments that you don't need to be a trained scientist as distinct from a layman to make photostat copies or send one to an Inspector of Police. It is rather that the layman seldom has the time or the reasons for making a thorough enquiry. Then he says, 'The real danger is that Mr Parsons' critical attitude will frighten the layman (who is only too aware that he is liable to be condemned as a layman) from reporting interesting facts. In the early stages of a new branch of science it is usually the layman rather than the expert—the Mendels, the Darwins, the Galtons, the Einsteins—who break new ground. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was not the professors at the Universities or the members of the Royal Society who made the really startling discoveries in magnetism, chemistry, electricity and biology. Often the lay scientists' highly original papers were refused publication because they had no degrees, or had not had time and money to follow up their unorthodox discoveries or ideas.'

He adds that the history of medicine supplies some striking examples. Laymen's reports of the effects of cinchona bark (quinine), extract of willow (virtually aspirin), even poppy seed (opium) were discounted, not to mention anaesthetics, antiseptic surgery, hypnosis and psychotherapy.

R.H.

### *The Spiritualists*

SIR,—As one whose name is mentioned in Mr Trevor Hall's *The Spiritualists* as accepting the truth of and attaching importance to the Katie King seances, I feel that I must write and say that after reading his careful summary of the evidence, in default of further evidence emerging which could rebut his thesis, I am bound to accept his case as proven. I have read the story with great sadness, not so much at the demolition of a piece of evidence which I had hitherto considered significant as on account of the tale of human fallibility, credulity, deception and sin therein contained, and all who care for the truth must be grateful to Mr Hall for the additional 'caveats' which he enjoins upon students of parapsychology, even though I detect a few traces of sulphur and *odium theologicum* or *parapsychologicum* in his work! I must add that pending the printing of a slip to warn readers about the pages in my Resurrection pamphlet dealing with Katie King and also Mrs Guppy's dematerialisation (which seems to me equally suspect) I am withdrawing the work from sale.

However, my belief in survival, and the possibility of communication, or in the reality of the Resurrection does not depend on Katie King or on the possibility of materialisations, and remains unimpaired.

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SIR,—A chapter and an Appendix in Mr Hall's detailed and absorbing study of Sir William Crookes's testimony concerning the medium Florence Cook is devoted to the statements made at the S.P.R. by the late Mr F. G. H. Anderson. As I was personally responsible for obtaining the later 1949 statements from him and knew him well for many years, I would like to make some comments about the action taken with regard to these statements.

Mr Hall writes (p. 177)<sup>1</sup>

'The testimony of Anderson, given to the SPR in 1922 and 1949, remained a secret buried in the archives of the Society . . . although rumours about it have been current for many years.'

Certain spiritualist and other papers are not so restrained in their comments. For example, *Psychic News* of 30 June 1962, reporting what Mr Hall is supposed to have said to the reporter of another paper, says

'Moreover, it is alleged, as Hall told the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, that "letters which prove the amazing deceptions were left unpublished by the Society for Psychical Research because Crookes was their President". Thus it is implied that the SPR were accessories to this fraudulent conspiracy.'

Mr Anderson and my father were contemporaries in the I.C.S., Bombay Presidency. I myself met Mr and Mrs Anderson in India very occasionally for some 15 years from 1911; when my husband retired and we went to live at Rivermead Court, Hurlingham, London, we found the Andersons were already living there. We thus became neighbours and thereafter met fairly frequently. After his wife's death some 10 years later, Mr Anderson lived in Ireland for a while; but in 1949 he was in London and I visited him on the afternoon of 23 November 1949 and mentioned casually that I had been at the S.P.R. all day (I was then Organizing Secretary to the Society). He immediately said that he had once visited the S.P.R. himself, many years previously, to deposit

<sup>1</sup> All page references are to *The Spiritualists*, Duckworth, London, 1962.

a statement about Sir William Crookes and his medium, Florence Cook. I was immediately all ears to the story he was only too willing to pour out; questioned him closely, and asked him what proof he had, if any, for his tale. He immediately dived into a cabin trunk and produced two photographs of Florrie Cook, preserved with those of other fair ladies to lighten dull hours! I suggested to Mr Anderson that he should visit the S.P.R. with me, meet Mr Salter, the (then) Hon. Secretary, and repeat his story to him. He agreed to this, but meanwhile, within 24 hours, I wrote out a long, personal statement from memory, incorporating all Mr Anderson had just told me.

His visit to the S.P.R. took place on 1 December 1949, where he met both Mr Salter and Dr Dingwall; and on 4 December he dictated a further statement to me for the Society's files, which I took down on the typewriter and he signed.

There are thus three documents in the S.P.R. files giving Mr Anderson's testimony:

- (1) A very short statement dated 8 June 1922, written and signed by Dr Dingwall (at that time Research Officer to the Society) after he had interviewed Mr Anderson at the S.P.R. on 7 June.
- (2) A long personal statement signed by me and dated 24 November 1949, recounting what Mr Anderson had told me the day before.
- (3) A long statement dated 4 December 1949, signed by Mr Anderson, following his visit to the S.P.R. on December 1st to tell his story to the Hon. Secretary.

It has been suggested that, as I was meeting Mr Anderson between 1937 and 1949, I had perhaps, in the course of conversation, given him a good deal of information about Crookes and his experiments with Florence Cook, which may have coloured his subsequent 1949 testimony. I feel sure this was not so. Had I mentioned my interest in psychical research to him earlier than in 1949, he would without doubt have given me his story then, and I would have taken the immediate steps to record it that I did in 1949. He was, in fact, prone to boasting of his various amorous escapades and I had listened to many such in other connections. There is no hint in my long, detailed 1949 statement that we had ever before discussed Crookes, or indeed psychical research, nor do I recollect that we ever did so. Mr Anderson had no particular interest in the subject beyond his personal memories of his affair with Florence Cook in 1893.

I pass to the suggestion, recorded above, that the S.P.R. was culpable in not making public Anderson's 1949 testimony.<sup>1</sup> Most

<sup>1</sup> Mr Hall reports (p. 99) that Anderson's information recorded by Dr Dingwall was given with the instruction to Dr Dingwall to tell no one of

S.P.R. members would, I think, consider that the standards of evidence to which the S.P.R. strives to adhere do not admit of publishing memories of events which occurred 56 years earlier, unsupported by contemporary notes. The information given to me was, however, of obviously great importance, if true. I therefore took every care to have Mr Anderson repeat his story afresh to the Society's Hon. Secretary, and to record it twice over in great detail for the Society's files. Not only that: far from these statements remaining, as Mr Hall avers, 'a secret buried in the archives of the Society,' we decided to show all the statements, very shortly after they were received, to Mr Abdy Collins (also I.C.S. ret'd.), an S.P.R. member and at that time Managing Director of *Psychic Press Ltd.*, and did so. In addition Mr Collins, at my invitation, met Mr Anderson for lunch so that they could discuss the matter together. Mr Anderson's statements were also shown to Miss Phillimore, Secretary of the London Spiritualist Alliance (now the College of Psychic Science), 16 Queensberry Place, S.W.7. They were available for *bona fide* students in the Society's files, and finally, when needed for the purpose of a carefully compiled record, photostat copies of Mr Anderson's statements were supplied to Mr Hall for his book.

In June 1954 Mr Anderson (then aged 83) asked my husband if he might come and share our flat and did so until c. March 1956, a period of 1½ years. He then fell ill, was twice in hospital, unable thereafter to attend regularly to his own work at a coaching establishment as heretofore, and needed attention and meals in bed which, as my husband and I were both out all day, we were unable to arrange. He therefore went on to live with his daughter in Alton, Hampshire, where he died in 1959.

Whilst he shared our flat, I had many occasions for marvelling at his extraordinary and brilliant feats of memory on all sorts of matters. I do not, therefore, doubt the general accuracy of his story embodying his memories of his relations with Florence Cook (Mrs Corner) in 1893; but his testimony nevertheless displays such minor inaccuracies as would be virtually inevitable regarding events of more than half a century earlier, and which justify the caution with which the S.P.R. receives such accounts.

For example: in his 1949 statement to the Society, Mr Anderson says that Florence Cook (Corner) had 2 daughters, 'one 17 and the

his statement, but to put the secret document in a file to be opened only when instructions were given to that effect. There is, however, nothing in Dingwall's 1922 statement itself to this effect; nor any reference to the allegation that Crookes was in collusion with Florence Cook, though it reports his infatuation for her.

other a little younger' in 1893. Mr Hall records rather vaguely (p. 135) that these two daughters 'were born in the 1880's'. The elder would, therefore, in 1893 be only a schoolgirl of 11 or 12 at most, instead of a young lady of 17: a difference in age which could not be confused were Mr Anderson's memories perfectly accurate.

Dingwall's statement of 1922 says Florence Cook was 'quite young' when Mr Anderson met her; she was in fact at least 36, or older still if Mr Hall's surmises are correct (pp. 2-3). Indeed, I record Mr Anderson as saying to me, when he told me his story, 'Well now let me try and remember; you know *some* of the things I am relating I haven't told to anyone for over 50 years and I should have to think it over to remember clearly how it all developed.'

As Mr Hall recorded, rumours about Mr Anderson's testimony were current for many years; I was aware that he had told his story regarding Florence Cook to others besides myself and, as I have recounted above, he was much given to boasting about such things. Therefore, as Mr Hall narrates (p. 178), when in 1959 the matter was alluded to by Dr Dingwall at a public meeting, and when again in 1960 questions were asked about it at a public meeting at the College of Psychic Science at which I was present, I felt the time had come to give an outline of the facts. In addition to what is quoted, I am sure I would also have stressed that, at that time, the story should be accepted with the caution necessary in dealing with uncorroborated statements of so long ago. Mr Hall's book has now supplied us with the contemporary records necessary for forming a judgment.

In summary, most careful steps were taken by me to put Mr Anderson's statements on record in great detail in the S.P.R. files and to have him repeat his testimony to another Officer of the Society besides myself; but *publication* of his adverse testimony regarding Sir William Crookes would have been as contrary to the care and caution rightly exercised (by and large) in the Society's publications as would be publicity given to hearsay marvels of the séance room based on memories of more than half a century. It is a pity other organizations and journals do not exercise the same discipline and restraint.

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## OBITUARIES

R. WARCOLLIER

Rene Warcollier was the 'elder statesman' of French psychical research. At the time of his death early this summer, he was one of the very last of that diminishing band who could look back to the dawn of this century—to the séances with Palladino. M. Warcollier took his 'training', as it were, with the pioneers who, facing ridicule and contempt, established psychical research as an avenue for scientific inquiry.

But Warcollier spurred ahead of his French colleagues, in much the same way as Dr Osty, and, from the murky depths of spiritistic superstition, marked the *possibility* of telepathy as a *probable reality*. By profession a chemical engineer, he was a life-long worker in the study of telepathy. President of the Institut Métapsychique International, his death leaves a gap difficult to fill.

In appearance he was frail, but his personality was sufficiently tenacious, strong, to grapple with the difficulties of *proving* telepathy. From about 1906 he wrestled with the enigmatic mechanics of extra-sensory perception and the results of his painstaking qualitative experiments are a challenge to the doubting statisticians. For M. Warcollier worked with subjects as people and not as impersonal numbers. In his view the study of telepathy yielded more positive results by qualitative experiment. He published, in 1921, *La Télépathie*; this work, coming out in the days when the physical phenomena were the 'rage' of Paris, linked the name Warcollier with the scientific tranquillity of the pioneers in our own Society. Not that Warcollier dismissed the physical phenomena of the séance rooms as mere props of legerdemain. His experiences with Palladino and Eva C. were puzzling; but inquiry was frustrated by hysteria and suspicion. It was Osty in France who later established the reality of telekinesis. Warcollier concentrated on the mental phenomena.

Within the scheme of Warcollier's findings, the problem of survival became secondary; but when he touched upon it there seemed to him to be sufficient explanation in telepathy between the living to account for the alleged spirit messages. His mind was open. But his work studied the living.

He joined our Society in 1928 and in 1946 was elected a Corresponding Member. In 1935 he was appointed to the Research Committee of the Boston Society for Psychic Research. With Professor Murphy, Warcollier continued his long-range telepathic experiments. One of the last major publications of the